

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Susana Mejia. I am a junior at the University of Connecticut and a resident of Waterbury. I am here as an ally to the undocumented community in support of an expansion of HUSKY to undocumented people in Connecticut.

I stand in support of SB 284: "AN ACT INCREASING THE AGE FROM EIGHT TO EIGHTEEN YEARS FOR AN INCOME-ELIGIBLE PERSON TO OBTAIN MEDICAL ASSISTANCE REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS" which will expand access to healthcare for those up to the age of 18 years, however, I ask members of the Human Services Committee to consider expanding health care access to all undocumented people regardless of age.

The passage of SB 284 and an expansion of health care insurance to all undocumented immigrants is important to me because I come from a family of immigrants and within my community of Waterbury, I know many people who would benefit from this. I am fighting for them. I am fighting for those who are afraid to speak out for basic human rights and I am fighting for our undocumented neighbors who work tirelessly to provide for their families, despite having lingering health conditions which go unaddressed due to their status.

Last year, Connecticut made great strides in expanding HUSKY to our undocumented community. The passage of Public Act No. 21-176 expanded HUSKY to children ages 0-8 years and also gave undocumented pregnant women access to prenatal and postpartum care. Although this is celebrated, it is not enough. Many undocumented people are still left behind. Primarily, parents and guardians are being forgotten. Children won't be able to succeed and live a quality life if their caregivers are suffering from preventative illness and thus unable to give quality care to their children. The bottom line: healthy kids need healthy families.

Analyzing the economic aspect, since undocumented people are unable to receive preventative care, they are forced to visit emergency rooms once their condition worsens. As a result, taxpayers and the state of Connecticut cover that expense at a higher cost than it would cost if there was early treatment. These emergency visits by uninsured undocumented people not only financially impact our state's pockets, but also financially impact undocumented people. Being uninsured, undocumented immigrants run the risk of being handed a medical bill which will lead them into costly debt. Uninsured, financially burdened, and unable to work, undocumented families suffer for visiting a doctor.

I support SB 284 and ask the committee to support and pass this legislation.

Thank you,

Susana Mejia